



**US Army Corps
of Engineers®**

Detroit District

News Release

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Soo Locks will stay open longer this season

DETROIT -- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approved a request to extend the navigation season as it applies to the Soo Locks for up to ten days.

Following extensive review and collaboration with multiple federal and state leaders, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approved a request to extend the navigation at the locks, which normally close midnight Jan. 15, 2004.

The locks will be open for navigation, if necessary, until no later than Jan. 25, and then will close until March 25.

Considered a one-time unprecedented delay request from the navigation community this 10-day extension will allow Great Lakes shipping interests to meet the strong market demand for steel products. Steel producers and iron-ore suppliers voiced concerns to the shipping community about moving approximately one million tons of iron ore and perhaps as much as 120,000 tons of coal after the end of the shipping season.

According to the request for the extended operational period for the locks, production shortfalls at the steel mills would have "ripple effects that could affect jobs and manufacturing well beyond the Great Lakes basin."

This extension will not change or amend the current agreement concerning the fixed navigation season. The opening and closing dates are set by regulation and by Memorandum of Agreement between the Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and the US Coast Guard.

The appropriate agencies approved this request based on the understanding that this issue is for the regional economy, with the minimal environmental impacts, and would be a one-time only, nonprecedent-setting extension.

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<p>The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District civil works program encompasses 93,000 square miles area of the lower Great Lakes basin in Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Ohio. The Corps operates and/or maintains 104 navigation structures in the basin. Its mission includes real estate transactions, flood control, regulatory activities, disaster response, and mobilization readiness.</p>

Soo Locks extension 2-2-2

“Lake Carriers’ Association thanks the signatories of the Memorandum of Agreement for this one-time extension of the Soo Locks closing date,” said Jim Weakley, president, Lake Carriers’ Association. “The

cargos that will move during these additional days of navigation are critical not only to maintaining the recent upturn in domestic steel production, but will enable our rebounding economy to continue its growth.”

The exact length of time the locks will remain open will be determined by the amount of iron ore and coal that still needs to be delivered after January 15, and the weather and ice conditions during that time.

Our organization moved rapidly to reach a decision on this request and believes it is one that not only can be supported operationally but that does not otherwise adversely impact the environment, said Lt. Col. Thomas Magness, commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District.

“I am especially proud of the collaboration between federal and state agencies in reaching this decision,” Magness said. “While we all approached this issue from a different perspective, we very quickly arrived at the same conclusion; this was a sustainable, supportable request.”

The Soo Locks afford the only passageway for ships up to 1,000 feet long, 105 feet wide, with drafts of up to 28 feet to navigate safely from Lake Superior through the St. Mary’s River down to the lower Great Lakes.

These locks represent the “key” to the vast iron ore ranges of the upper Midwest, and have been a leading factor in sustaining the steel industry of the United States.

Ships carrying tons of iron ore, coal, stone and other bulk products navigate through the 63-mile long St. Marys River headed toward eastward ports. The locks, located at the St. Marys River rapids, afford ships the ability to negotiate the 21-foot drop between the level of Lake Superior and the level of Lakes Michigan and Huron.

Ships transport an average 83 million tons of cargo a year through these locks with the most common product, iron ore, at an average of almost 50 million tons per year.

Many different types of vessels from around the world pass through this system varying in size from small passenger vessels and workboats to large ships carrying nearly 70,000 tons per load.

The entire Soo Locks system, which consists of the Poe Lock, MacArthur Lock, Davis Lock and Sabin Lock, falls in the Corps of Engineers, Detroit District’s jurisdiction with immediate supervision by the Soo Area Office Engineer.